

Miners Union Hall  
Upper end of Main Street  
Granite  
Granite County  
Montana

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
801 19th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20006

MINERS UNION HALL

Granite, Granite County, Montana

ADDRESS: Main Street (upper end), Granite, Montana  
OWNER: none  
OCCUPANT: none  
USE: Vacant

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The handsome three-story masonry Miners Union Hall was the social center of this once proud and active mining camp. Granite was known as the Silver Queen City, reaching its heyday in 1889 when production of the mines ran between \$250,000 to \$275,000 a month.

The St. Louis, Missouri investors in the two large mine-mills in Granite were richly rewarded. Silver from the Granite diggings built the big Eads bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The ghost town of Granite is located four miles southeast of Philipsburg, situated near the top of Granite Mountain. Silver was first discovered in this general area in 1865 by Hector Horton. This silver lode gave rise to the township of Philipsburg and the famous Hope Mine.

On July 14, 1875 the Granite Mountain Lode claim was recorded by James W. Estell, Eli O. Holland and Dr. Josiah M. Merrell, an assayer at the Hope Mine. The deeds of 1880 indicated that Charles D. McClure, superintendent of the Hope Mine had acquired title to the Granite Mountain Lode. McClure's faith in the potential of the Lode was strengthened by ore samples taken from an outcropping.

A company was formed to develop the claim and eventually received financial backing by St. Louis investors. After two years and \$130,000, the mine had produced little to warrant such an investment. In November, 1882, a rich silver bonanza shoot was made, barely in time, for the Eastern backers had, or were in the process of, ordering McClure to cease operations.

The stories differ. One states McClure had been notified to close the mine, but he allowed the men to complete the shift that led to the rich discovery. The other, and more dramatic, claims that the wire to stop operations had been sent to McClure but a blizzard delayed the delivery of the wire from the train station located at Drummond. A rider was sent from Granite to Drummond to notify the St. Louis backers of the rich find; between the towns of Philipsburg and Drummond he met the messenger with the "stop operations" wire. McClure's insistence in wanting to continue work paid off handsomely for the backers. Between 1885 and 1892, some twenty million dollars in gold and silver was produced by the Granite Mountain Mining Company.

The once-struggling mining camp boomed; the census of 1892 indicated that between 2,500 and 3,000 lived in Granite alone and an equal number was reported to have lived in nearby towns such as Rumsey and Hasmak.

The Granite Miners Union was formed in the summer of 1888, and their first anniversary celebration, a Miners Union Parade and Ball, was held on June 13, 1889 at the Knights of Labor Hall -- this according to an ad in the Philipsburg Mail dated May 23, 1889. Plans were made by the Union to erect a Union Hall of its own that would become the social center of the entire town. Construction began in 1890, and the building was formally dedicated on Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1890, New Year's Eve. An ad carried in the Philipsburg Mail on December 11, 1890 read: "Grand Dedication Ball, to be given by Granite Miners Union, at their New Hall, New Year's Eve, December 31, 1890, a cordial invitation to the public, tickets admitting Gents and Ladies, \$3.00".

The first floor of the building was built of native granite with a cast iron front and was built into the hillside. The other two stories were of red brick. The building was designed by J. R. Roberts of Butte, Montana, and cost \$23,000. The main hall, used for stage productions, dances, etc., was located on the second floor. It was a big room, 44' x 53' with a ceiling height of 18'-9" and a stage on the side near the mountain which was at grade level. The stage was designed by C. H. Young, also of Butte, who reportedly was designer of the stage for the Bozeman Opera House.

The Philipsburg Mail of Thursday, December 11, 1890, reported that: "The stage fixtures have been purchased of Lausman & Landis, Chicago, at a cost of \$400. Five hundred Eureka folding chairs will arrive in a few days." The same newspaper reported on December 18, 1890 that: "Three hundred dollars worth of lamps for the Miners Union Hall arrived Monday. The center lamp will weigh, when filled with oil, 400 pounds. G. B. Cain, the hardware man, furnished them".

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The third floor held a small hall 30' x 44' that was used as a lodge hall and meeting room for various clubs and secret orders. The first floor housed the lounge and recreation rooms for the miners.

Of interest is a portion of the dedication speech made by James A. Gilfillan, president of the Union, during the dedication on New Year's Eve, 1890. He stated, "The Union does not debate politics, religion or public opinion in their hall, and their meetings are confined strictly to the interests of the working men . . .".

Dances, concerts, theatricals and celebrations were held in the big main hall on the second floor. Granite became part of the theatre circuit of John Maguire of Butte, and minstrel shows, plays and operas appeared there for several years. Then, on August 1, 1893, an order came to shut down the mines. Within twenty-four hours the town was almost deserted, and it was three years before it began to struggle back to life. But as the people returned, the Miners Union Hall again became the social center of the town, with dances in the main hall, and meetings upstairs.

Today the furnishings are gone and the roof over the main hall has fallen in; only the roof over the lodge room on the third floor front of the building remains. The maple "spring floor", once the finest in the Northwest has long disappeared, and the floor sags back to a void where the stage once stood. The shell of masonry sides and front remain, but the interior is disintegrating.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

- Hutchens, Joseph, One Man's Montana, J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia & New York, 1964.
- McMillan, A. C., "Granite's Glittering Glory", Montana, the Magazine of Western History, vol. XIV, no. 3, summer, 1964.
- Montana Almanac, 1959 ed., Montana State University Press, Missoula, 1959.
- Philipsburg Mail (newspaper), Philipsburg, Mont., May 23, 1889, June 20, 1889; March 27, 1890; December 11, 1890; December 18, 1890; January 1, 1891, and January 8, 1891.
- Resources of Montana, 5th ed., published by the Union Pacific, St. Louis, 1893.
- Wolle, Muriel S., Montana Pay Dirt: A Guide to the Mining Camps of the Treasure State, Sage Books, Denver, 1963.

## ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

## ESTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - 98'-6" x 48'-1"; a three-story masonry structure built into the hillside.

Foundation - native stone.

Wall Construction - Two foot thick granite walls form the first floor exterior east and west side walls with a cast iron and wood panel front. The cast iron decorative column and end wall covers were cast in the Western Iron Works foundry in Butte, Mont. The 8" walls of the second and third floors are of red brick with cut granite trim for the windows and a decorative cornice of sheet metal on the front. There are 8" x 24" brick pilasters on the side walls.

Openings - Entrances: On the north facade three sets of double doors, two of which are recessed. Each door consisted of a double raised panel and large single light. Openings had a continuous transom of glass-colored glass in small square panels framing a large sheet of glass. Two sets of doors led into the lounge and recreation areas that occupied the lower floor and the third set opened into a staircase leading up to the second floor or public area. On both the east and west walls near the south end of the building, a door led to the interior. The wood doors are three-paneled with a circular masonry head frame. From the rear of the stage area a single door opened on the east wall, as well as one on the west wall. The west wall door apparently led to an exterior staircase, now gone.

Windows: The first floor had windows set in wood frames on the front of the building only. Although the glass is now gone, there remains enough of the frames to indicate that the six large panes of glass were of 1/4" plate with a continuous transom above. Here small square panels of colored glass framed a single pane of glass within the overall window mullion divisions. Two tall narrow windows, glass and frames now gone, occur on the first floor east and west walls, and are now shuttered and probably were permanently closed in earlier times.

The second floor and third floor front windows are framed in brick with granite trim in tall window bands which give the illusion of a high second floor front facade and obscure from the exterior, the third floor level.

The window openings on the sides (east and west walls) are tall narrow windows, four on each side, which give light into the high-ceilinged main hall. These are double-hung windows with a decorative panel above and capped by a transom light in a circular headed masonry frame.

Roof - a sheet-metal covered Mansard roof covered both the main hall of the second floor and the third floor lodge hall room. Only the roof over the third floor front section remains today.

Chimneys - five brick chimneys once crowned each of the east and west side walls.

## INTERIOR

Floor Plan - The ground floor, now in ruins with its interior finish and wood floor gone, once housed the lounge and recreation areas. Two large narrow rooms ran almost the full length of the building, each with a small semi-court behind it that was formed by the south wall and the hillside, but accessible by a doorway to the exterior, one facing east and the other west.

The long room on the east is 63'-6" x 24'-2". The exterior recessed doorway on the north facade is centered in the room. The other long narrow room is of equal length but only 18'-9" wide. Its exterior front doorway is also recessed but is placed on the west side of the room abutting the wall of the staircase. The stairway to the second floor occupies the northwest corner of the room and has its own exterior doorway. The two long rooms are divided by a solid granite wall, 1'-4" thick, having a connecting circular-headed passageway 8'-9" wide set back from the front facade 25'-2". In the late 1940's and early 1950's one could still find the billiard tables and card tables in this area. Since then all furnishings have been removed.

In addition to the large hall, 44' x 53', with the 16' x 44' stage on the south wall, the second floor contained several rooms that had been partitioned off for the president and secretary of the Union, a library and council room, a reception room, ante-room, ticket booth and hallways.

A stairway along the east wall led to the third floor lodge hall which consisted of a single 30' x 44' room.

Ceiling Heights - first floor, 12'-2"; second floor front rooms, 10'-4"; second floor main hall, 18'-9"; third floor lodge room, 7'-2".

Stairways - one leading from the exterior doorway to the second floor and another from the second floor to the lodge hall.

Floors - T & G pine except for the maple "spring floor" of the second floor main hall. Strips were nailed to the underlayment about 16" apart and at a diagonal to the room's rectangular plan. The maple boards then spanned the strips, thus giving a "spring" in the floor for dancing.

Wall and Ceiling Finish - The first floor walls were plastered directly over the granite bearing walls. The staircase leading to the second floor and the second floor hall had a soft wood wainscot artificially grained and stained to resemble hardwood. The second floor interior walls were wallpapered, and the third floor walls were plastered.

Ceilings in all the rooms were plastered except in the northeast corner room of the second floor which had a metal pan ceiling.

Trim - All trim was elaborately moulded pine with an artificially grained finish.

Hardware - none remaining.

#### GENERAL SETTING

The building is located on the upper part of what was once the Main Street of Granite. The structure faces north and is built back into the mountain behind it.

Prepared by,

*John N. DeHaas, Jr.*

John N. DeHaas, Jr.  
Architect

May 1967

APPROVED:

*A. Lewis Koue*

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Supervising Architect

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San Francisco Planning and Service Center

National Park Service

DATE: